



MONTGOMERY COUNTY EDUCATION ASSOCIATION

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Bonnie Cullison, President Thomas Israel, Executive Director

June 30, 2008

President Mike Knapp
Montgomery County Council
100 Maryland Avenue
Rockville, MD 20850

RE: Montgomery County Council Proposal for an Emergency Medical Services Transport Fee

Dear President Knapp,

My name is Bonnie Cullison. I am president of the Montgomery County Education Association, representing the 12,000 teachers and other non-supervisory professional educators working in our schools every day to help our students learn and grow.

I wish to submit our testimony in support of implementation of an Emergency Medical Services Transport Fee. We believe this is a reasoned approach to raising the revenue the county needs to continue to improve its emergency response services, and one which has a minimal impact on county residents and taxpayers.

Since billing health insurance companies for emergency transport is not only allowed, but is increasingly common, it seems to make little sense to put this cost on county taxpayers. As the County Executive has proposed, no County residents with health insurance will be charged as a result of this fee, and no County residents without health insurance will be charged.

We recognize that some have expressed concerns that such a fee could discourage those in need from calling 911. However, such fees are in place in virtually all of our neighboring jurisdictions. Prince Georges County, the District of Columbia, Fairfax County, Frederick County, Arlington County, and the City of Alexandria all have EMS Transport Fees. There is no indication in any of these jurisdictions of any discouragement of EMS usage.

One of the things we are focused on in our schools is data-based decision-making. There is simply no data indicating that EMS Transport Fees discourage use of emergency medical services. As a county, our decision-making should be based on data – not on speculation.

We are keenly aware of the challenging budget situation facing the county. Our residents have high expectations for public services, including public education, public health and public safety. Yet at the same time, everyone recognizes there are limits to the burden that can be

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carried by property tax payers. It is difficult to explain why we would continue to ask taxpayers to pay for all of the costs of our emergency medical services when it is possible to have some of the costs paid for by health insurance companies and the federal Medicare program.

Therefore, we support the proposed EMS Transport Fee and urge the Council to work with the County Executive's proposal to pass a plan that can help provide a little relief to county taxpayers while also ensuring a strong future for our emergency medical services.

Sincerely,

Bonnie Cullison

Bonnie Cullison
President